

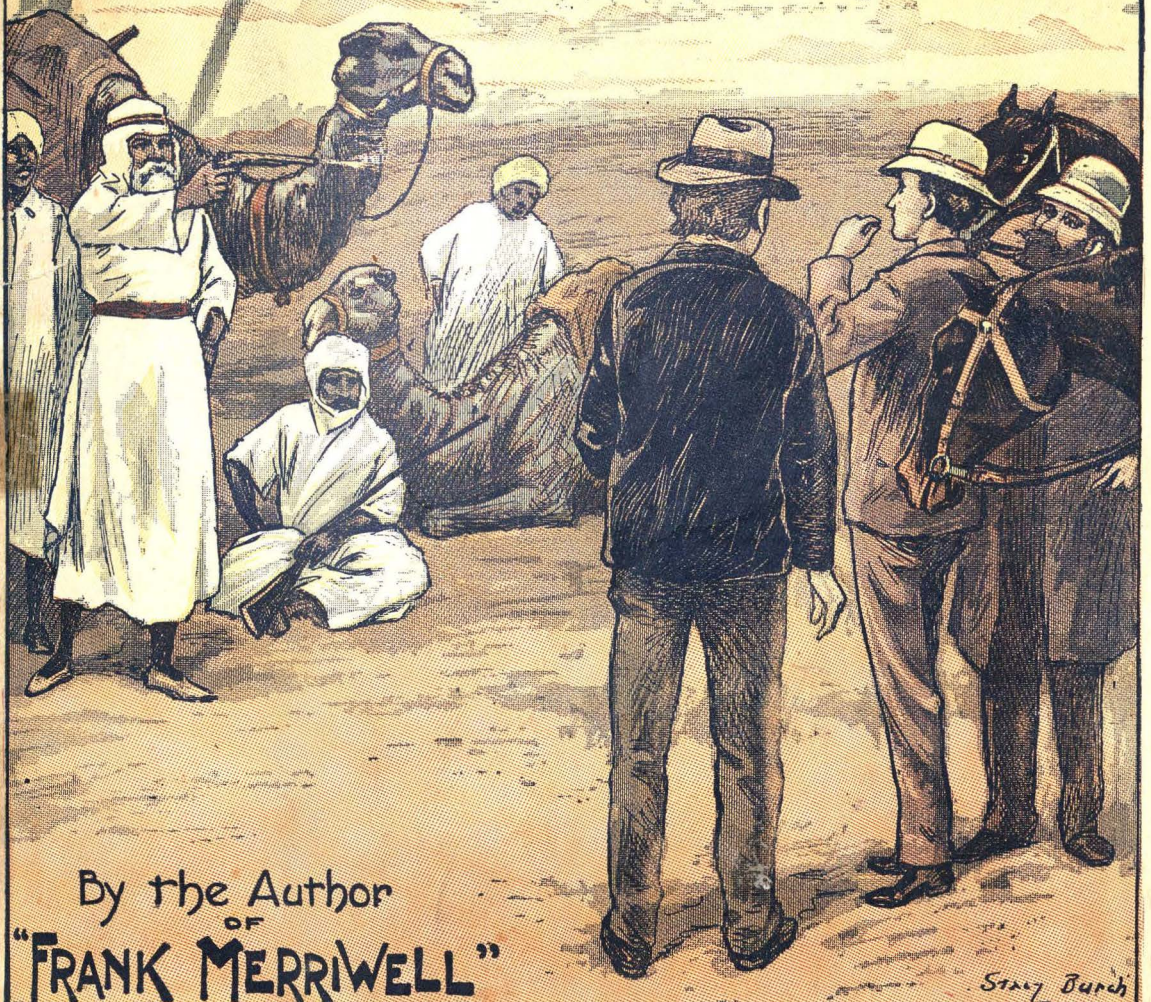
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October 31, 1896.

Vol. I. No. 29.

Price Five Cents.

FRANK MERRIWELL'S MAGIC OR THE PEARL OF TANGIER



By the Author
OF
"FRANK MERRIWELL"

Stacy Burch

WHEN THE PISTOL SPOKE, FRANK PRETENDED TO TAKE THE BULLET FROM HIS TEETH.

TIP TOP LIBRARY.

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FRANK MERRIWELL'S MAGIC; OR, THE PEARL OF TANGIER.

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CHAPTER I.

THE ARRIVAL IN TANGIER.

"Hurrah!"

It was a hearty boyish shout, and it came from the lips of Frank Merriwell, who stood on the deck of a steamer that was approaching the coast of Morocco.

Ephraim Gallup, the boy from Vermont, who was at Frank's side, drawled:

"Anybody'd think yeou was gittin' hum by the way yeou holler. I don't know what yeou see to make such a 'tarnal racket abaout."

"Look, Ephraim! yonder is Tangier, lying like a snow-white pearl on the shore of the blue Mediterranean. It is a sight to quicken the blood."

He pointed to the white walls of a city that could be plainly seen.

"It looks purty fair from here," admitted the Vermonter; "but 'cordin' to yeour own statement abaout it, it won't look so well when we git there."

"That is very true; but it is the gateway to a strange land for us—a land of strange people, strange customs, of wonders and marvels innumerable. Besides that, I am tired of the sea, and I long to get ashore once more."

"By gum! I don't blame ye fer that. But I'd ruther git ashore where folks are civilized. I've seen enough uv black men an' heathen."

Frank laughed.

"Surely we have had our fill of them; but I would not like to return home without visiting Morocco."

Before long the speed of the steamer began to lessen, and it finally came to a stop, the anchor chains rattling, as the anchors were dropped.

"Gol dern it all!" exclaimed Ephraim, clutching Frank's arm. "Will yeou jest look there! Is that a gang uv crazy critters comin' to attack the steamer, ur what do they want?"

Some boats were pulling off from the shore, and behind them was a swarm of tattered Arabs, half naked, wading in the water, advancing toward the vessel, waving their arms wildly, and uttering strange cries.

"Evidently that is one of the queer things we are to see in this country," said Frank, quietly.

The boats reached the steamer, and the passengers were hurried into them by the boatmen. Frank and Ephraim succeeded in getting into one boat, and were called

on to pay for their passage immediately after they had left the steamer.

The boats moved toward the throng of tattered terra-cotta-colored human beings, some of whom had waded in the water to the middle of their thighs.

As soon as this disreputable-looking horde was reached, it precipitated itself upon the boats. The passengers were seized by the jabbering gang, as if they were to be put to death without delay.

One old fellow grabbed Ephraim and tried to drag him from the boat.

"Git aout!" squawked the boy from Vermont.

He hit the old Arab a back-handed blow with the flat of his hand, knocking the man over in a twinkling.

But the old Arab was not to be baffled in such a manner. Dripping with water, he scrambled up and grappled with the excited youth.

Seeing a catastrophe was coming, Frank lost no time in climbing out of the boat to the shoulders of a burly mulatto, where he sat in a comfortable position, waving his hat and shouting:

"Go it, boys! I'll bet two to one on Vermont! Yankee Doodle forever!"

"Stand off, yeou gol dern black pirut!" howled Ephraim, who had been somewhat blinded by the splashed water. "Keep yeour dirty hands off me, or I'll — Wa-ow!"

Over went the boat, precipitating the boatman and the Yankee lad into the water, where there was a general floundering about, much to the amusement of the other passengers.

Frank Merriwell's hearty laugh rang out.

"If this is a sample of what we'll strike in Morocco, we'll have more fun than a funeral," he cried.

Ephraim came to the surface, spouting like a whale.

"Ding blast ye!" he squealed, standing up and shaking his fist at the bewild-

ered Arab. "Yeou wait till we git no dry land, critter! I'll fix ye!"

Then he began to wade ashore.

"I am surprised, Ephraim," said Frank, soberly, "that you should make such a racket over a matter like this. The tan-colored gentleman simply wished to carry you ashore, as the water is too shoal to permit the boats to approach nearer. You will observe that all the passengers are going ashore in that manner."

The lad from Vermont looked around, seeing that Frank spoke the truth. The ladies were being carried ashore in chairs, while the male passengers bestrode the necks of the Arabs and negroes.

"Wal, why in thutteration didn't they tell a feller what they was arter!" growled Ephraim, looking ashamed and disgusted. "They acted jest ez if they wanted to murder the hull on us."

When the shore was reached, Frank paid for the transportation of both himself and Ephraim, as the old fellow whom the Vermonter had upset demanded payment.

"Here we are!" Merriwell cried. "And now we will find a hotel."

Inquiry revealed that there was one European hotel in the city, and Frank secured a guide to pilot them thither.

Ephraim grumbled as they made their way along. He was dripping with water, and presented a ludicrous aspect, but the populace in the streets did not smile upon him. He was regarded in a stoical, indifferent manner, as if he were a worm of very small importance. Men drew aside from the boys, and women avoided them, while children fled in terror.

"Real sociable people," chuckled Frank. "Judging by the way they act, any one would think we must be blood-thirsty savages."

Nearly all the people in the streets were enveloped in a sort of long, white woolen cloak, with a large cowl, gener-

ally worn straight up on the heads, so that the whole city presented the aspect of a convent of Dominican monks.

Some of these hooded people passed gravely, slowly, and silently, a dreamy look in their eyes, as if their thoughts were far away; some remained seated or crouching along the walls, or at the corners of houses, immovable and with fixed eyes, like the enchanted ones of the Arabian Nights.

On their way to the hotel they passed through several narrow, winding streets, flanked by small white houses, without windows, and with small, mean doorways, through which it could not be easy to enter.

In many of the streets nothing was to be seen but the whiteness of the walls and the blue sky overhead.

Nearly all the streets were littered with rotten vegetables, feathers, rags, bones, and sometimes with deceased cats and dogs.

As may be imagined, the odors were often anything but agreeable.

At long intervals were seen groups of Arab children, playing or reciting verses from the Koran in a nasal drone.

Beggars were plentiful, squatting along the streets.

Here and there the nostrils of the boys were assailed by the odor of garlic, burnt aloes, benzoine, fish, and things unnamable.

The square was reached, and was found to be a little rectangular place, surrounded by wretched shops.

At one side was a fountain, around which was a crowd of Arabs and negroes, engaged in drawing water in various vessels.

At the other side of the square veiled women were seated on the ground, offering bread for sale.

The little square was thronged with almost naked vagabonds, rich Moors, Jews, employees of the legations, the houses of

which were near at hand, interpreters, and beggars galore.

For the time, Ephraim forgot that he had received a ducking. He looked around, his jaw drooping.

"I be gol derved ef this don't beat the deck!" he muttered. "Never saw nothing like this before."

"It is rather interesting," nodded Frank. "I fancied you would find it so."

At this moment, a veiled girl suddenly broke away from two men, who seemed to be acting as her escorts, gave a low cry of joy, rushed toward the boys, and flung her arms about Merriwell's neck, sobbing:

"Frank! Frank! they said you were dead!"

CHAPTER II.

A MISSION IN MOROCCO.

Never in his life was Frank Merriwell more astonished. He could scarcely believe he had heard aright.

Ephraim Gallup caught his breath and gurgled:

"Wal, by gum!"

Shouts of surprise and rage broke from the men who had accompanied the girl. Quickly drawing short, curved swords from beneath their cloaks, they sprang toward the lads.

"Unhand her, Christian dogs!" roared one, flourishing his sword, as if he would cut Frank down in a moment.

"Take me away!" implored the girl. "I am willing to go with you now! Do not let them touch me again!"

That appeal was enough to arouse the chivalry in Frank's nature. Swinging her to one side, he drew a revolver.

"Stand off!" he ordered, sternly.

"And keep off!" squealed Ephraim, as he let his clinched fist shoot out and catch one of the men under the ear.

It was a heavy blow, and the old Moor was knocked down in a twinkling.

A roar went up from all sides, and a rush was made for the two lads, who found themselves surrounded by a furious and raging mob.

It had come about with marvelous swiftness, so that even Frank was a trifle bewildered.

Some of the mob brandished daggers and scimiters, and all seemed thirsting for the blood of the two youths.

The old fellow who had been knocked down got upon his feet, waved his arms, and shouted forth an order.

In the twinkling of an eye, the lads found themselves overwhelmed. The revolver was dashed from Frank's hand, the girl was torn from his grasp, and he received a blow that staggered and dazed him.

Ephraim was used no less severely.

"Dogs," howled the mob, in Arabic. "Kill them! They have defiled the Pearl of Tangier with their touch! Kill them!"

Frank realized that they were in deadly danger. He saw a man about to strike at Ephraim's back with a dagger, and, with a terrific kick he sent the fellow spinning into the midst of the crowd.

A blow was aimed at Frank's head with a scimiter, and the boy barely had time to dodge it.

"It is a fight for life!" he cried. "We must defend ourselves as best we can! Use your weapons, Ephraim!"

He struggled to get out his second revolver, but, just then, it was found unnecessary for them to defend themselves with firearms.

The second Moor, the one who had shouted at Frank in English, now ordered the mob back. He addressed them in Arabic, and they seemed to give over the assault on the boys with great reluctance, drawing back slowly.

Not knowing what might follow this move, Frank held himself in readiness for anything, regarding the old Moor with no little curiosity.

The man turned on the boys, gazing at them gloweringly, as if he longed to annihilate them, yet hardly dared. After some moments, he spoke.

"Knaves," he growled, "you should die! Do you know what you have done, miserable Christians?"

"Attempted to defend a girl who appealed to us, but made a sad failure of it," replied Frank, looking around for the mysterious girl, but seeing nothing of her.

"You have defiled her with your touch, and she is the Pearl of Tangier! But that is not all. You struck Ben Ahmet, who is her uncle and protector, and who is also a descendant of Mohammed, the sacred one."

"Is that so!" drawled Ephraim, dryly. "Wal, I wouldn't 'a' struck Ben ef I hedn't thought it necessary. As he's a trifle older than I be, I'm sorry I hit him at all. Jest tell him I apologize."

"Bah! That will not wash away the stain. Your blood would have flowed if he had ordered it so. From this hour you are marked. If you remain in Morocco you shall not escape just punishment for your offense. It is best that you delay not in leaving the country."

Frank whistled.

"This is interesting," he said, coolly. "We have just arrived."

"It matters not. If you would live, depart at once."

"Well, we will think it over. We can't go till the steamer leaves, unless we swim across the straits, and that would be too much trouble."

"I have spoken."

"And who be yeou?" demanded Ephraim.

"I am Ali Mustaf, the Caid of Thwat, favored by the Prince of Believers and Vicegerent of God upon Earth."

"Wal, gol dern my cats!" gasped the boy from Vermont. "We didn't know

we'd run up against anything like that. Will yeou excuse us for livin'!"

"You have heard. Take heed."

Ali Mustaf turned and waved his hands to the throng, whereupon the mob slowly and reluctantly dispersed, giving the boys many black looks, and muttering sullenly.

Ali Mustaf and Ben Ahmet moved away.

"What in the world became of that girl?" muttered Frank, looking about.

"She disappeared in a twinkling."

"She was carried away by some uv the dad-blamed craowd," said Ephraim. "One uv them old varmint's must hev told them to take her away."

"And she knew me."

"She did?"

"Surely. Didn't you hear her call me by name?"

"I guess I did. But haow in thunder did she happen to know yeou?"

"That is a mystery—one I would give something to solve."

"Frank."

"Yes."

"Yeou're havin' yeour same old luck."

"What do you mean?"

"Why, gittin' mixed up in some kind uv a racket with a gal. Gals alwus seem to be callin' on yeou to help um, an' they keep yeou in hot water a good part uv the time."

Frank smiled, picked up the revolver that had been torn from his hand, and placed the weapon in his pocket.

"It is the way of the world," he said.

"The fair sex make most of the trouble for us."

Then his face became clouded again, and he bit his lip, looking about in an unsatisfied way.

"How shall I find her again?" he murmured. "I did not see her face. I should not know her if I saw her."

"I kainer guess we'll have aour hands full, without botherin' abaout her. Mis-

ter Mustaf informed us that we was marked."

"That was a bluff to scare us out of the country. These swarthy fellows do not like Christians. They dare not harm us, however. If they did, they would not have stopped when they were crowding around us a short time ago."

"Mebbe yeour right, Frank. Yeou 'most alwus be, but somethin' kainer tells me we'll have more trouble with Mister Mustaf and Mister Ahmet."

"I could not go away without making another attempt to see that mysterious girl. Something tells me she is in serious trouble. Besides that, my curiosity is aroused, and I must know how she learned my name. It is possible I have met her before. More than that, I have thought of another possibility."

"What is it?"

"She spoke perfect English."

"Yes."

"Which is remarkable, as everything indicated she could not be more than sixteen or seventeen."

"Wal?"

"Moorish girls of that age are not likely to have opportunities to learn the English language."

"I s'pose not."

"Can't you see what I am driving at?"

"Dunno's I kin. I'm kainer thick-headed."

"Why, she may not be a native of this country at all—she may be an English or American girl."

"Great gosh!"

"And she may be a captive. It is possible she has been kidnaped for the harem of some miserable old Moor. The thought makes my blood boil. Ephraim, we have a mission in Morocco. It is to find that girl and rescue her, if needs be. We will do it!"

"We will do it!"

Before the eyes of the wondering rabble the dauntless boys clasped hands.

CHAPTER III.

FRANK SEEKS INFORMATION.

When they looked around for the guide whom they had employed to lead them to the only European hotel in the city it was found that the fellow had fled, affrighted by the encounter which had taken place in the square.

The boys were about to look for another guide when, with cries of surprise and joy, a small, red-whiskered man, dressed in a tourist's traveling suit, such as is worn in hot countries, came hurrying toward them.

"Gol derned ef I don't b'lieve I've seen him afore!" exclaimed the boy from Vermont. "Them whiskers look natratl. It is——"

"Professor Scotch, as I live!" joyfully shouted Frank Merriwell. "Will wonders never cease! This is miraculous."

The little man ran forward and caught Frank's hands, looked into his face, as if making sure he was not mistaken, and then clasped the boy in his arms.

For some time the little man was nearly overcome with joyful emotions, and Frank was scarcely less delighted.

It was in truth Professor Horace Scotch, Frank's guardian, who had thus marvelously appeared in Tangier.

Mutual explanations followed quickly. Frank told how he happened to be there, and then the professor related how on arriving in London he had received a letter from the boy, but had been disappointed beyond measure when Frank did not appear in due time. He had written scores of letters and sent hundreds of telegrams, but had been unable to learn anything more than that Frank had left Buenos Ayres in a vessel that had been lost at sea.

The professor had nearly given up all hope of ever seeing his *protege* again, thinking Frank must be dead. He resolved, however, to make every effort to

ascertain the facts as to Frank's fate, and had left London for that purpose.

The United States Consul at Tangier was an old friend of the professor, and thus it came about that Scotch had visited him.

Then the boys came.

The professor was so agitated that his explanation was somewhat incoherent, but Frank was able to get the drift of it.

When his excitement had subsided a bit, the little man began to scold. He soundly berated the boy for running off to South America without permission and continuing over the world on his own hook.

Frank listened quietly, a smile on his face.

"There, there, professor," he finally said. "What's the use of making a fuss about it. Wait till we get to the hotel, and I will explain more fully why I went to South America."

So the professor led the way to the hotel.

The professor had obtained a native servant by the name of Azza, and the fellow was immediately dispatched for the luggage of the two boys, being given a written order by them.

While waiting for the luggage, the trio talked matters over.

Azza returned with the luggage in due time.

Both lads lost no time in exchanging their clothing for suits of white duck, suitable for the climate.

"There!" exclaimed Ephraim. "I feel better, by gum! Them wet duds warn't comfortable."

A square meal followed, and then Frank told the professor of their adventure since arriving in Tangier.

"Merciful goodness!" gasped the little man, with uplifted hands. "It's a wonder you were not both killed. These Moors are dreadful creatures, and they do not consider the life of a Christian of any

consequence. I have heard of Ben Ahmet. He is very rich."

"I don't care about him," said Frank. "What I want to know is if that girl was truly his niece."

The professor called Azza, and Frank questioned the fellow.

Azza declared that Ben Ahmet had a niece who was known far and wide as "the Pearl of Tangier," a title which had been given her when she was yet a child. It was rumored that she was very beautiful. Her name was Igela.

Igela's father, unlike most Moors, had traveled much outside his own country. Originally he was a very poor merchant, but it was said he had traveled as far as London and had learned tricks of trade from Christian dogs, so that he came back to his own country and soon made a fortune.

He was an exporter of goods, largely handling the caps made at Fez. One of his customers, a great English merchant, once visited him, and was received graciously in the Moor's house. This was but shortly before the death of Igela's father.

Igela was the old merchant's only child. He regretted much that she was not a boy, for she displayed much business capability.

The old merchant left his property to his child, intrusting her to the care of his brother, Ben Ahmet.

Ben Ahmet had also made much money, but he was quite unlike his brother. He hated Christians so that he would not do business with them, and he would not speak a word of their language, although he understood much of it.

Seeing that Igela was budding into womanhood and was very beautiful, Ben Ahmet made her conceal her face with a veil. Still she was known far and wide as the Pearl of Tangier.

There were many who sought Igela for a wife, but it was said that she had ac-

quired strange notions of marriage, and had refused to accept the man whom her uncle chose, saying she would suit herself in that matter.

That was all Azza knew about her.

"Very interesting," commented Frank; "and still unsatisfactory. It seems that Igela knew me to-day, and that she can speak almost perfect English. Who is Ali Mustaf?"

"He is a powerful caid, or tax-gatherer," answered Azza. "It is said that he seeks the Pearl for a wife."

"Ha! Then that explains his remarkable interest in her, and it likewise explains why she fled from him. This is becoming as interesting as a romance. I feel in duty bound to offer her my assistance. But how am I to do so?"

That was a question not easily answered, and Frank puzzled over it for a long time.

Professor Scotch was alarmed by what had happened, by Frank's manner, and by the threat which the Moor had uttered against the boys. He was in favor of getting out of Morocco without delay; but Frank had no thought of being frightened away thus quickly.

"Look here, Azza, old boy," he said, "I'll make it worth your while if you will take a note to Igela. Can you do it?"

"I can try."

"Well, that is something."

In vain the professor urged him not to send a note, nor to attempt to communicate in such a manner with the mysterious girl.

"Don't get fluttery, professor," advised Frank, coolly. "If you try to be too strict with me, I may take a fancy to run away again."

The professor groaned.

"You are incorrigible," he declared. "It is impossible to do anything with you."

So Frank wrote the note and sent

Azza out with it, offering him a tempting reward if he would deliver it into the hand of Igela, and warning him to give it up to no other person. He worded it briefly as follows:

"TO IGELA, 'The Pearl of Tangier':
 "Are you in trouble? Do you need assistance? If so, tell me how I may aid you."
 FRANK MERRIWELL."

Azza was away from the hotel for nearly two hours. At length he returned and placed a folded paper in Frank's hand, saying simply:

"This is her answer."

CHAPTER IV.

PROFESSOR SCOTCH SEES THINGS,

Eagerly Frank opened the paper, but in a moment a look of disappointment came over his face.

"It is written in Arabic," he said. "I cannot read it."

Azza bowed low.

"It will give me great pleasure to read it for you," he said.

Frank scanned the fellow closely.

"Can you read writing?" he asked, as if somewhat doubtful.

Azza assured him that he could both read and write. Frank hesitated a moment, and then passed the note to the servant. Azza translated it as follows:

"I am in great trouble, and you can aid me. Come this evening at nine. Azza will guide you. Trust all to him."

"IGELA."

Frank frowned, and then he questioned the Arab.

Azza told how he had found the house of Ben Ahmet and had lingered till he saw one of the sheriff's servants whom he knew. By the servant he had sent word to Igela, and she had finally appeared at the parapet of the terrace. Then Azza had attached Frank's note to a small stone, which he had tossed to her. She

had read it, had written the reply, and then had instructed Azza to guide Frank to a certain spot that evening, saying she would be there.

Frank was not quite satisfied with this story.

"It is rather remarkable that she could read my note, written in English, and could not write a reply in English," he said, watching the face of the Arab closely.

"She was much excited," Azza calmly explained. "She feared much that she might be seen."

"But that doesn't explain why she did not write in English."

"She must have forgotten in her haste and excitement."

Frank was forced to confess to himself that such a thing would be very natural, but still he questioned Azza. It became evident, after a little, that the Arab was very shrewd or perfectly truthful, and the boy was inclined to think him the latter.

Frank went to his room and pondered over the matter for some time. He realized that by many he would be considered foolish in his attempt to aid this unknown girl.

But his curiosity was thoroughly aroused. He could conceive of no possible way that she could have known him in the past, and yet she had fled to him for assistance, calling him by name.

A mystery of that sort was quite enough to make Frank determined to seek the solution.

And never had he turned away when appealed to by beauty in distress. That this girl was in trouble and hoped for assistance from him was certain.

"I will go to her to-night," he resolved. "I will aid her, if it lays in my power to do so. That is settled."

Ephraim came into the room and found Frank putting on a lead-colored garment, which he wore beneath his outer shirt.

Frank showed his comrade the note

from Igela, and explained what the girl had written.

Ephraim looked doubtful, and shook his head in a sober way.

"I'm afeared yeour goin' to git into a heap uv trouble, Frank," he said. "I'll bet a big squash Mister Ahmet is kainder keepin' watch uv yeou, an' he'll know ef ye try to see the gal."

"Oh, you are getting to be a veritable croaker, Ephraim. I am not afraid of Ben Ahmet, and I am determined to have a talk with Igela."

"Wal, I ruther guess yeou'll do jest as yeou durn please, fer I've alwus noticed yeou do. Yeou'd better take me along with ye."

"Not on this trip, Ephraim. I am going to go it alone."

Still Frank was doubtful, although he would not confess it, even to himself. He carefully examined his revolvers, taking both of them.

Professor Scotch came in and expressed his curiosity over a queer little cabinet which Frank had taken from his trunk.

"Oh, that's a curiosity I picked up," explained the boy. "I fancied it might come in handy some time, and I mean to carry it home with me."

"But what in the world is it?" asked the professor, endeavoring to open it, but being unable to do so. "How do you get into the thing?"

"This way."

Frank touched the cabinet, and the top flew open, while up shot the head of a serpent with forked tongue and fiery eyes, seeming to hiss and strike at the professor.

Scotch gave a shriek of terror and fell over backward.

"Save me!" he roared. "I'm a dead man! Kill the thing!"

"What's all this about?" asked Frank, in apparent surprise. "What is the matter with you, professor?"

"Snakes! snakes!"

"Snakes? What are you talking about? Where?"

"There!—Why, where is it? It has gone!"

The professor sat up and stared in amazement at the cabinet, which was wide open, but no snake was in sight.

"Too bad!" said Frank, turning to Ephraim. "I did have a faint hope that the professor would leave it off, but it is still plain that he sometimes looks on the wine when it is red."

"What's that?" roared the little man, who had a big, hoarse voice. "What do you mean? Do you insinuate that I have been drinking?"

"Of course I do not wish to hurt your feelings, but——"

"I tell you I saw a snake!"

"Too bad!" sobbed Frank, getting out his handkerchief, and pretending to wipe a tear from the corner of his eye.

"But I am positive of it."

"They always are."

"It must be right here somewhere. Look around for it."

"I wouldn't, professor—you may see something worse."

The professor was aroused. He had permitted the United States Consul to treat him rather generously with strong drink since coming to Tangier, but he was positive that had nothing to do with the appearance of the snake, and he was angry with Frank for insinuating anything of the sort.

"Look out!" he rumbled, grasping his cane and thrusting it into the cabinet. "I'll poke the reptile out, or—— Whoop! Murder! Take it off!"

With a shrilling squeal, a large rat had jumped out of the cabinet and seemed to run along the cane toward the professor's hand.

The little man dropped the stick in an instant, and once more fell flat upon the floor, where he made a wild scramble to get away, and stopping only when he had

reached a distant corner, where he sat up on the floor, his back against the wall, his eyes popping from his head.

"Where it the beast?" he gurgled, hoarsely.

Frank turned to Ephraim, wringing his hands in apparent distress.

"The professor has gone mad!" he moaned.

"Mad!" roared the little man, gathering courage, as he saw nothing of the rat. "Who wouldn't be mad to have a slimy serpent strike at him, and then be attacked by a red-eyed rat."

"Too bad! too bad!" sighed Frank. "I fear he will become violent. We must send for a doctor immediately."

"Doctor!" howled Scotch. "I don't want a doctor. I tell you I'm all right! But I know when I see a snake and a rat. The snake hissed at me, and the rat tried to get on my hand."

"It is a very bad case," came soberly from Frank, while Ephraim turned his head to hide a broad grin.

Scotch got on his feet, and danced round like a maniac.

"Confound it all!" he shouted. "There's nothing the matter with me! I am all right! I know what I see!"

Frank followed him up, patted him on the back, caressed his hand, and said, soothingly:

"Of course you know—to be sure you do. There was a whole drove of snakes, and more than a hundred rats."

"No, there wasn't!" snarled the little man, grinding his teeth. "Don't tell me that! Think I'm a fool?"

"Too bad!" sighed Frank, giving Ephraim a lugubrious look that nearly convulsed the lad from Vermont. "This is the way with them every time. Now he is sure he didn't see any snakes and rats. That is proof positive that he is in a dangerous condition. Wouldn't it be terrible if we found it necessary to have

him taken in charge and cared for constantly?"

Professor Scotch gave an exhibition of a wild and somewhat original war dance. When he was out of breath, he paused in front of Frank, shaking his fist in the a boy's face as he gasped:

"I see through your little game! You want to get rid of me! You want to go as you please! You want to do as you choose! That's why you ran away to South America. But it won't work, you young rascal! I'll stick by you now, though you may bring my gray hairs in sorrow to the grave."

Then he tramped up and down the room like a caged tiger. Coming near the cabinet, he lifted his foot to give it a kick; but, at that instant a hollow voice that seemed to come from the cabinet itself, said:

"Beware! Touch me not!"

And then a grinning skull popped into view and nodded familiarly at the little man.

The professor gave a howl, and rushed out of the room, leaving the two boys, who were in paroxysms of laughter.

When the boys had ceased to laugh somewhat, Frank approached the cabinet, rolling up a little ball of invisible cord as he did so. Without hesitation, he took hold of the skull and thrust it back into the compartment from which it had popped into view.

"There," he said, "I rather fancied this cabinet would afford me some amusement when I bought it from that traveling magician. The professor forgot that I sometimes practice ventriloquism, and so he fancied it was the skull that spoke. If he had continued to monkey around that cabinet I would have shown him some other things of a surprising nature."

Then he arranged everything in the cabinet, which he closed, and returned to his trunk.

CHAPTER V.

TREACHERY.

Under cover of darkness, guided by the dark-skinned Azza, Frank Merriwell left the hotel shortly before nine.

Azza avoided the square and stole along the dark and narrow streets with a swift, cat-like tread.

Frank followed closely, making sure his revolvers were ready for instant use.

Both man and boy were enveloped in the hooded cloak so common in Tangier.

The shoes which Frank wore had cork soles, so his footsteps made very little noise.

At intervals they brushed against persons who were moving in the narrow streets, and Frank seemed to see sharp eyes peering at him from beneath beetling brows.

Tangier was not a pleasant city to roam about in after nightfall.

It seemed to Frank that it was a city well adapted to dark deeds—a place where crime might thrive with little fear of punishment.

As far as possible, Azza avoided the pedestrians who were moving on the streets.

In every nook and angle dark shadows lurked, like crouching assassins, and more than once the boy clutched his revolver, ready to draw and defend himself from attack.

They passed through a maze of winding streets, so that the boy became quite bewildered. He had thought to remember every turn, so he could return to the hotel without a guide, if necessary, but he was soon forced to confess to himself that such a thing would be beyond his ability to accomplish.

All at once, the silence of the night was broken by a distant fusillade of shots, and Azza halted suddenly.

They had reached one of the wider streets, which leads to the gate of Sokko.

Far along the street there was a glare of many torches, swaying, moving, advancing.

Frank wondered what it could mean, and questioned his guide.

"Look, and you shall see," said Azza, drawing the boy still farther back, so that they might readily step into the shadow of a wall and let the torches pass.

Frank did look, and he saw a surging crowd of human beings, revealed by the flaring torchlight, which flickered over their dusky faces. They were dressed grotesquely in cloaks and robes and winding garments, and all seemed greatly excited. Now and then they fired into the air with muskets and pistols.

Dogs were barking, there were sounds of plaintive music, and the great throng kept up a droning and nasal chant, now and then broken by strident cries.

Near the van of the procession was a coal-black horse, fiery and headstrong, held in check by the powerful Arabs, who walked on either side. On the back of the horse was something in the shape of an upright coffin.

Frank gazed at this strange procession with interest and wonder.

"What does it mean?" he asked. "Is it a funeral?"

"No," replied Azza; "it is the wedding march of a young girl. She is in that casket. These people are her parents and friends, who are accompanying her to the home of her husband."

"Well, that is certainly very strange and remarkable."

"To a Christian it may seem strange," admitted Azza; "but it is the custom here."

When the procession had passed they crossed the street and went onward along the dark and winding ways.

At last, with a warning hiss, the Arab halted

Instinctively, Frank felt for his weapons once more, for, although he could not see

his surroundings, he felt that he was in a rather unsavory quarter of the city. The smells which assailed his nostrils seemed to assure him of that.

Azza uttered a soft signal, and then they waited. Twice he repeated the signal. At the third call a muffled figure glided out of the shadows and approached them.

"It is Igela," whispered the Arab.

Frank's heart leaped. There no longer seemed a doubt they would meet the mysterious girl who was known as the Pearl of Tangier.

She came toward them in a hesitating, doubtful way, till Azza assured her that all was well. Even then she seemed oppressed by terror and dread. When Frank stepped toward her she shrank away.

"You need have no fear of me," he said, softly. "I am your friend."

She did not reply, but she still seemed much alarmed. Frank did his best to reassure her.

"You are in distress," he said. "Tell me how I may serve you."

"Not here," she whispered. "We shall be seen. Come."

Her hand touched his, and she led him toward the wall, where a small door opened.

"Now I will see the adventure through to the end," he thought, and he followed her recklessly.

Azza followed, closing the door noiselessly. Frank could feel the fellow close behind him.

The boy seemed to know it was a rash adventure, but, with a reckless abandon that sometimes assailed him, he went on, eager to know what would follow.

The girl led him through a narrow passage and into a room where a lamp dimly burned. From this room they passed across an open court, entering by another small door, and traversing another long passage.

From this they entered a room that was

lighted by a swinging lamp of fantastic pattern. On the floor was a thick carpet of Rabat, while the walls were hung with yellow and red tapestries. Mattresses and cushions were piled everywhere, and the colors of the rainbow met the eye on every hand.

Frank looked around with interest. The room seemed to be unoccupied when they entered.

Having made a hasty survey of the apartment, Frank turned toward the girl; but at that moment there was a noise behind him, and he wheeled to see two fierce-looking, bewhiskered, turbaned Moors rush into the room.

They were Ben Ahmet and Ali Mustaf! "Dog of a Christian!" snarled Ali Mustaf. "You have walked into the trap, and now, by my beard, you shall die!"

Ben Ahmet cried out something in his own language, flourishing a scimiter as if he longed to strike the boy's head from his body.

Instead of being overcome with terror, Frank was astonishingly cool. He surveyed the two Moors complaisantly.

"So it was a trap," he quietly said. "Well, I should have known it, but I did trust this old wretch."

And then, with remarkable swiftness, he made a spring and let one hard fist shoot out from the shoulder.

Frank's knuckles caught Azza on the chin, and the scoundrel was lifted off his feet and hurled with a dull thud against the wall, from which he dropped in a limp heap to the floor.

"That was easy," laughed the reckless youth, as if he really enjoyed the situation. "Now, Ben, it is your turn."

Ben Ahmet flourished his scimiter, and Ali Mustaf lifted a long-bladed knife, crying:

"Back, dog of a Christian, or by Allah! this shall pierce your heart!"

"Oh-ho! So that's the trick! Well, if

I stand back, what do you propose to do? Tell me that."

"You are trapped, knave."

"Are you sure? I will acknowledge that I allowed yonder base slave to deceive me; but it is a strong trap that can hold me."

"By the beard of the Prophet, you speak boldly, boy."

"I speak the truth. What do you intend to do with me?"

"You shall never pass from beneath this roof alive."

Frank whistled softly.

"That is agreeable information. So you mean to murder me?"

"You would have lured away the Pearl of Tangier."

"And you would force her to marry you against your wishes, you old reprobate! And you are old enough to be her father—yes, her grandfather! You ought to be tarred and feathered!"

Ali-Mustaf looked as if he longed to sink his glittering dagger in the heart of the dauntless youth.

"Your tongue shall be torn out by the roots!" he grated, furiously. "Your body shall be cast to the swine, Christian dog!"

"You continue to make pleasant promises; but you may discover it is not possible to make them all good. I expect to be frisking around on *terra firma* long years after you are sleeping sweetly under the daisies."

Having walked into the trap, Frank was determined not to show a tremor, knowing it would be the worse for him if these men saw that he entertained the least fear.

Azza had crawled to his feet, and he was keeping his beady eyes on the boy, a savage expression on his crafty face. Plainly he longed to have revenge for the blow that had driven him like a bag of sawdust against the wall.

The girl had remained speechless since entering the room, much to Frank's surprise. He had thought she would be much

wrought up over the appearance of her uncle and Ali Mustaf, but she betrayed no emotion.

Sudden suspicion assailed the boy. Could it be possible that she had conspired to lead him into this trap?

"Igela," he cried, "did you know these men were lying in wait for me? It is not possible that you betrayed me?"

"She did," declared Ali Mustaf, with fierce satisfaction. "She brought you here that we might finish you this time."

"I will not believe it! It is not possible she could be capable of such treachery! Tell me it is not true, Igela! Speak! Say this old wretch lies!"

"It is true!" said the girl. "I aided them in trapping you."

CHAPTER VI.

A BOY OF NERVE.

Never in his life was Frank Merriwell more taken aback and chagrined than at that moment. He could scarcely believe he had heard aright.

Ali Mustaf laughed harshly.

"See what a fool you have been, Christian-dog!" he sneered.

Azza, the treacherous servant, joined in the laughter.

"I aided her in trapping you," he declared.

"Which is certainly something to be very proud of," came contemptuously from the boy. "But you shall receive your just deserts, you dirty wretch!"

Now Frank was thoroughly aroused, and he showed his anger in his flashing eyes. He had walked into the snare against the warnings of his better judgment, but he had not dreamed of treachery on the part of the girl. Even now he could not understand why she should betray him.

"How have I wronged you that you should do such a thing?" he asked, earnestly. "Tell me that, Igela!"

She turned away, something like a smothered laugh coming from beyond the veil that concealed her face.

Such treachery appalled Frank Merriwell and filled him with wonder unutterable. He could not understand it. Had he been lured to that place to be plundered? Was it possible that this fair girl who was known as the Pearl of Tangier was the decoy that secured victims for a set of robbers and assassins?

Even if this were true, it did not explain how she happened to know his name, when she saw him in the Square of Tangier for the first time.

All at once Frank started. His eyes had fallen on the girl's hand and he was filled with astonishment.

One swift step the boy took, and then he made a spring, crying:

"I propose to see the face of the one who betrayed me!"

In a twinkling, he had snatched away the veil which concealed the face of the girl.

The face of a coal-black negress was revealed!

"Igela!" exclaimed the boy, scornfully. "You are not Igela!"

The girl fell back against the wall, with a cry of fear.

Ben Ahmet and Ali Mustaf uttered fierce oaths in their beards, starting toward the boy.

In the twinkling of an eye Frank whipped out both his revolvers, retreated till his back was against the wall, and cheerfully called:

"Walk right up, gentlemen—walk up and take your medicine! You shall receive it in large and liberal doses. Walk up—walk up!"

It is needless to state that they were in no hurry about accepting his pleasant invitation. The sight of those glittering revolvers brought them to an abrupt halt.

"What think you, dog of a Christian?"

sarled Ali Mustaf. "Do you fancy you can fight us all?"

"Well, I can make it mighty warm for you."

"And do you fancy there is a chance for you to escape from this place alive?"

"You can never make an American give up till he is dead. As long as there is a spark of life remaining in his body he will fight."

"But the odds, miserable boy—think of that."

"Three men and a treacherous black wench against one Yankee boy—why, that is nothing at all. Don't think you can frighten me in that way, Ali, old boy."

"Ha! Think you that is all? Fool! There is but one way that you can leave this room, and it is by this passage. Look!"

The caid flung open the door at his back, and the light showed Frank Merriwell that the passage was literally filled with dark-faced ruffians, all of whom were armed to the teeth. They would have swarmed into the room, but Ali Mustaf bade them remain where they were, and closed the door again.

The crafty Moor turned to the boy, expecting to see him overcome with fear. He was much astonished to note that Frank stood up with a dauntless look on his handsome face, showing not the least sign of trepidation.

"Fool!" snarled the caid once more. "Do you understand what you have seen? Or are your wits too dull for that?"

"I understand that I have seen a lot of dirty cut-throats who are awaiting the call to do your dirty work," was the calm reply.

"By the beard of the Prophet! you are a strange youth! You must know they are longing to shed your blood. They hate and despise all Christians, and to them it is a great delight to shed the blood of a

Christian dog. If I gave the signal, they would rush in here and cut you down."

"Very good. But you will not give the signal."

"I will not?"

"No."

"Why not, dog?"

"Because it would be the signal for your death."

"What mean you?"

"I mean that I should take particular pains to send a bullet through your wretched carcass the instant the signal was given."

Ali Mustaf's swarthy skin grew sallow, and he recoiled a bit.

"Allah save me!" he muttered, in Arabic. "The young dog means it! It is a marvel that he has no fear."

Then the two Moors exchanged some words, keeping their eyes upon Frank all the while.

Frank Merriwell well understood the peril of his situation, and he felt that all the chances were against him. At the same time he had no thought of giving up as long as he could struggle for his life.

While the men were consulting together Frank's brain was busy trying to devise some plan of escape. He felt that much depended on his wits.

In a few moments Ali Mustaf turned to the boy once more.

"Put down your weapons," commanded the old tax-gatherer, with a severe frown. "Put them down at once. You can never escape alive if you threaten, but I may decide to spare you if you surrender quietly."

Frank laughed scornfully.

"Because I walked into this trap so quietly it is plain that you believe me a much greater fool than I am," he said. "I do not propose to surrender myself a helpless captive into your hands; but I do propose to hold you a prisoner till I am once more safe in the streets of Tangier."

"By my beard!" gasped the caid. "Who ever heard of such impudence! Boy, you must be insane!"

"Think you so? Well, madmen are dangerous, and I advise you to look out for me. If you do not obey my orders there is no telling what I may see fit to do to you."

"Your orders!" frothed Ali Mustaf.

"Dog! I am not your slave!"

"But you are my captive, and I shall shoot you full of holes if you try to skip me. That is plain United States, and I trust you understand it thoroughly."

Once more the caid turned to Ben Ahmet, speaking a few low, swift words. Immediately the old sheriff would have left the room, but Frank's voice rang out sharply:

"Tell him to stop, Ali Mustaf—tell him to stop or I will shoot him!"

It was not necessary for Ali Mustaf to repeat the boy's words. Ben Ahmet seemed to understand, and he stopped, grinding out an Arabic oath.

"Good enough!" nodded Frank. "Now we will get down to business. Ali Mustaf, you must do as I direct, if you have any desire to prolong your existence in this vale of tears. I am the ringmaster in this little circus, and I am liable to use the whip."

"What would you have me do?" sullenly growled the caid.

"First, I would have you cast down that knife. Drop it, you old pirate, or I'll drop you!"

Frank's eyes flashed, and Ali Mustaf made haste to cast aside the dagger, as if it had suddenly grown red-hot.

"So far it is all right," nodded the determined youth. "Now you are to order your side-partner, Uncle Ben, of the profuse whiskers, to drop his scimitar. That is a real ugly looking weapon, and I wouldn't care to have it frisking around my neck."

The caid spoke to Ben Ahmet, and the

sheriff reluctantly dropped the curved weapon.

"What next, dog?" sullenly demanded Ali Mustaf. "Do you think you have one chance in a thousand of escaping? Then you deceive yourself greatly."

"That's all right; don't you worry about me. Just do as I tell you, if you are anxious about your own health. Something further, Ali, old boy, and that is you've altogether too familiar manner of addressing me as 'dog.' I don't like it. It is not my name, and I object to it. Hereafter, you will not use it when you speak to me. Do you catch on?"

The caid snarled again, showing his yellow teeth through his grizzly beard.

"Now," coolly continued Frank, "the next thing on the programme will be something else. You are to step to the door and order the gang of dusky-skinned followers of the True Prophet outside to retire. You are to inform them that everything is settled in here, and you will not need their assistance."

Ali Mustaf seemed quite ready to do this, but Frank checked him immediately, calling out sharply:

"Hold on a bit! I want to say this much: Although I do not speak Arabic, I can understand it pretty well, and it will not be pleasant for you if you tell the slaves outside anything but what I have directed. If you do tell them anything different so help me Jack Robinson, I'll put two or three bullets between your shoulder blades! Go ahead, old boy."

Ali Mustaf hesitated, his face black as a storm cloud. And as he hesitated he saw something that caused a wild, exultant light of triumph to leap into his eyes.

Behind Frank Merriwell a panel in the wall opened noiselessly. At the opening appeared a black face, and then a pair of powerful black hands closed around the throat of the unfortunate boy!

CHAPTER VII.

THE DUNGEON OF DEATH.

Those iron fingers crushed into flesh and sinew till the bones of Frank Merriwell's neck cracked with the terrible pressure. He could not cry out, he could not breathe, he could not turn about and face his unseen assailant.

In a moment Frank dropped his revolvers and clutched at those hands, seized the wrists, and tried to tear them away.

All in vain!

The black man beyond the panel seemed to have the strength of a Samson and be possessed with a fiendish desire to crush the life out of the boy.

There was a buzzing sound in Frank's head, and it swiftly swelled to a roar. A blood-red mist swam and swayed before his eyes, and through this he saw the exultant faces of Ali Mustaf and Ben Ahmet grinning.

Frank felt that he must tear those iron hands from his throat or he was lost, and he made frantic efforts to do so; but the frightful pressure had robbed him of his strength, and his efforts were like the struggles of an infant.

Then it seemed that many lights flared before his vision, rockets burst into scintillating stars of ten thousand colors, and all the universe was whirling through a fiery sea of space.

The roaring in his head had swelled to the thunder of a Niagara, and then died to the soft murmur of a lapping brook. He seemed to hear tinkling fountains, delightful music, and sweet voices calling, calling, calling——

Frank sat up. All was dark and dank about him, with a musty, underground smell. He drew his breath with difficulty, and there was a terrible pain in his throat and neck, which now and then sent a dagger dart to the very top of his head. He knew something had happened, and he felt that he had been injured, but his

senses were confused, and he could not remember.

He put out one hand. It touched a slimy wall of stone. He felt beneath him. Wet ground there. He put out the other hand. Nothingness.

Then he heard some one breathing heavily close at hand, and the sound—harsh, rasping, blood-chilling, like the gasping of a strangling person—seemed to turn him to stone for some minutes. He sat there, listening to that horrible breathing, fully convinced that a mortally wounded human being was dying near at hand.

As he sat thus, with a rush, memory returned. He knew he had been led into a trap by the treacherous Azza. He remembered holding off the two old Moors until he had been seized by an unseen assailant, and then——

That frightful sound continued near at hand, turning the boy's blood icy cold. Had he been thrown into a dungeon where lay some other victim of the blood-thirsty Moors—some other unfortunate Christian, it might be? He held his breath to listen, and the sound stopped.

"He is dead!" thought the horrified lad.

But, a moment later, the rasping breathing began again, and then Frank made a singular discovery.

The sounds came from his own throat, which had been fearfully crushed by the iron fingers which had fastened on it.

He lifted his hand to his neck, and found it terribly sore to his touch.

"It is a wonder that I am yet alive," he told himself.

And then came the thought that it might be much better for him if he were dead and out of his misery.

Beyond a doubt he was a prisoner, confined in some horrible place, doomed to perish there alone.

Alone! That was a terrifying thought. It seemed even more horrible than his

fancy of a few seconds before that a dying man was near.

A sudden desire to cry out, to shout, to scream, came upon him. He opened his lips to do so, but no more than a hoarse gasp, that was half a groan, came from them.

He was seized by a feeling of despair—a mad longing to spring up and rush away somewhere, anywhere.

Staggeringly, feebly he got upon his feet; but then he was seized by another fear, and he stood still.

Dense and fearful darkness lay all around him, and he could not see what pitfalls might be on every hand.

The situation was one to chill the strongest heart, to turn the blood of the bravest man to water.

"This is some secret dungeon beneath the city, and I shall never escape from it of my own efforts," thought the boy. "Who is there to save me? The professor does not know I left the hotel. I could not tell him, for he would have forbidden it. I was forced to leave Ephraim behind to take up the attention of the professor while I got out. Ephraim knows I was going somewhere to meet this mysterious Igela, as I supposed; but he does not know where I was going. How will they trace me?"

That was a question to which he could not find a ready answer.

"Even if Ephraim and the professor were to confront Ali Mustaf and Ben Ahmet and accuse them, the two rascally old wretches would plead utter ignorance, and there is little chance for a Christian to obtain his rights in this country. The professor might get the United States Consul to do something, but I have my doubts."

Frank fully understood how desperate and almost hopeless his situation must be. At first he wondered that he had not been killed outright, and then he came to believe that Ali Mustaf and Ben Ahmet

had hated him so that they had thrown him into this dank underground place to perish by inches in order that he might suffer wretchedly. And then it was possible that they had believed him dead when they cast him in there.

For all of the boy's gloomy thoughts, he found his strength returning, and strength brought hope. He would not give up as long as life and energy were left in his body.

But what could he do?

"If I had a light!"

He uttered the words aloud, finding that his voice had regained its power in a measure, but it sounded hoarse, unnatural, and muffled.

As the words left his lips, there was a sudden squeaking and a hurried scampering sound that seemed to make his hair stand.

Rats!

They were there in large numbers.

"Great Scott!" gasped the boy. "I had rather face a tiger than a swarm of rats in a dark cellar!"

Nervously he felt through his pockets. His purse was gone, but it had not contained much money. Not a weapon was left him, his clasp-knife having been taken, with other things.

Then he uttered a cry of joy.

His fingers had found his waterproof match-safe, which he constantly carried.

That had not been taken from him.

"A match!" he palpitated. "That will show me something."

In another moment he had taken the match safe from his pocket, but, in his nervousness, he dropped it.

With a muttered exclamation of dismay he stooped to find it.

A moment later a gasping cry of horror came from his lips.

His hands touched something cold and slippery, and that touch was enough to make him shudder and quake.

Frank fell back, and for some minutes

he crouched there in the darkness of that terrible place, feeling cold chills run down his back.

"I must have those matches," he finally muttered, although the words were broken and unsteady. "It is a case of must, and I'll find them, even if I have to feel the thing all over."

He seemed to feel himself in the midst of unseen horrors, and he longed to rush from the spot, but he knew that there would not be one chance in a hundred of his finding the matches if he moved away.

Setting his teeth and nerving himself for the task, he felt about for the match-safe—and found it!

With a feeling of unutterable joy and relief he clutched the metallic case. His fingers found the spring, and it opened to his touch.

Snap—splutter—flare!

A match was lighted. It flared up, and then burned steadily.

Frank immediately looked for the object which he had touched, and there it was before him—a human skeleton!

The bones were stripped clean of flesh and the skull grinned up at him in a ghastly manner. The light of the burning match glistened on the white spots and showed a dank, green mold that was forming in places on the skeleton.

It was a most ghastly and nerve-shaking spectacle.

All at once, as Frank stood there, turned to stone, staring at the uncanny object, the skull began to rock from side to side! It was no hallucination—it actually moved!

To the staring, astounded, and horrified lad it seemed that the thing was about to speak. Indeed, Frank found himself listening, with hushed breath and stilled heart, for the hollow-sounding words that should issue from that fleshless head.

The boy was spellbound—hypnotized with horror.

And then, just as the flame of the match

burned his fingers, a half-grown rat darted out of the skull and scampered away.

The match fell and lay, a dying spark, on the damp ground.

In a moment the boy had lighted another match. He looked at the skeleton. It now lay silent and motionless, but scarcely less terrible to the eye.

"A victim of those miserable old Moors," thought Frank. "And this foretells my own fate! I am to die here, and my bones are to bleach and rot beside the bones of this unfortunate wretch, who was, perhaps, a Christian like myself."

Then he was seized by a tempest of rage, an ungovernable fury against the men who had cast him into that dungeon of death. He longed for the power to slay them, to blot them from the face of the earth.

"God help me!" he madly cried. "I must not die here—I will not die here! I will live to get square with them!"

CHAPTER VIII.

IGELA.

Hours passed, and every hour seemed a day.

Frank Merriwell explored the place where he was confined, and found it a large underground vault or cellar. There was a passage leading from it to some slippery stairs of stone. At the head of the stairs was a stone door. Hercules could not have moved that door from its position.

Frank explored all parts of his prison, and what he discovered was of a most discouraging nature.

There seemed no possible way of escaping.

Most boys would have given up in despair, but Frank still clung to hope, vowing he would live to "get square" with his captors.

His matches were running low, and the thought of being left with no redemption from continued darkness was far from pleasant.

He had returned to the spot where he had found the skeleton, when he was startled to hear a jarring, scraping sound far along the passage.

In a moment the boy was on the alert, his heart thumping violently, his whole body quivering with excitement.

Some one was coming!

At the farther end of the passage there was seen a gleam of light.

"They are coming to finish me!" thought Frank. "It must be that. Well, they may have a heavy job."

He had no weapon save his bare hands, but he was desperate, and he felt capable of coping with several men. He would be fighting for his life, and he would possess all the fury of a cornered tiger.

The light moved, and he could see that its bearer was coming down the steps of stone, moving rapidly.

Swiftly the boy moved toward the passage, making no noise. He would be ready to meet the bearer of the light the moment the vault was entered.

Peering along the passage, he saw a strange figure approaching—a girl, muffled and veiled, holding a lighted lamp of quaint and curious make above her head.

Her face below the eyes was hidden by a veil.

"Can it be?" thought Frank, in amazement. "Is this Igela? or is it the black wench that entrapped me?"

The flaring light was of a baffling nature, and he could not make out much save that it was a girl beyond the shadow of a doubt.

The thumping of his heart became so loud that he feared she must hear it. He pressed one hand over it, trying to smother the sound of its heavy and rapid pulsations. Through his head the blood was rushing like a riotous, roaring river.

His mind was filled with a thousand wild conjectures and speculations. His thoughts were in a mad tumult.

It seemed to the eager boy that the girl advanced with the slowness of a snail, and still he dreaded to have her come nearer. Never before in his life had he been so wrought up, and he began to realize that his confinement in that horrible place had worked havoc with his nerves.

Many of the sensations Frank experienced as he waited for the girl to approach were new to him, and he wondered at himself. A thought that he must go mad if forced to remain long in that vault flashed like a blood-red rocket through his brain.

Then he noticed that the hand of the

girl which held the lamp was shaking as if she had the palsy. It was a fair, plump hand, but it seemed about to loose its hold and let the lamp fall.

The girl halted, and it was plain that she was nearly overcome with fear. She seemed on the verge of flight.

"She must not run away now!" thought the excited youth. "If she tries it, I shall overtake her before she can reach the steps."

He bent forward, ready to make a dash if she turned to retreat.

"Frank!"

She spoke his name, and it was the voice he had heard once before in the Square of Tangier. For all that it echoed strangely in that underground place; he was sure that he recognized it.

"Igela!"

He spoke the name softly, so that she might not be frightened.

He saw her start, saw her lean forward doubtfully, her attitude being that of a person who fancies he has heard something, but is not sure.

"Igela!"

He repeated the name.

"Allah be praised!" sobbed the girl, again starting forward. "He answers me! He lives! He is here!"

Then Frank advanced toward her saying:

"I am here, and I am alive."

She swayed, and he caught the lamp from her hand with a deftness that saved it from falling. His free arm encircled her. He longed to see the face hidden by that veil.

In a moment the girl had recovered, and she started from him, saying swiftly:

"Am I a child that I lose my strength thus! I am strong now. How you escaped from Bab-el-Maroc I know not. Great was my wonder and joy to see you in Tangier. Ben Ahmet told me you were dead, and Ali Mustaf swore it was true."

Frank was not a little puzzled by her words. He would have questioned her, but she suddenly started, catching him by the arm, and panting:

"Listen! Is it some one I hear coming this way?"

Both listened, but heard nothing save the rustling movement of a rat.

"We must get away soon," whispered

the girl. "If they should come—if they should find us here! We must go!"

"But how did you know where to find me?" asked Frank, whose curiosity was great. "How did you know where they had placed me?"

"I heard them talking. They did not know I was listening. They spoke of you, saying they had disposed of you at last, and that you would never escape to trouble them more. I stilled my heart—I listened, and I heard them say where they had placed you. Then, when my time came, I hastened here. The door was barred, but with all my strength I dragged the bar away. Then it was that my courage nearly failed me. I prayed to Allah. I took up the lamp and here I am."

"Brave little girl! They had left me here to die—to starve and be devoured by rats!"

"And I will save you! But, oh Frank! how are we to get out of Tangier? I cannot! You must go alone—you must leave me to my fate!"

Her voice broke in a sob, and he drew her closer to him, mystified, bewildered, but dauntless.

"That I will never do," he boldly declared. "You shall come with me. We will seek the protection of the United States Consul. He will aid us."

"No, Frank, it is not possible. He will have no power to hold me from Ben Ahmet. It is not possible that we may escape together. That we must give up. You will be fortunate if you are able to escape with your life. Come, let us hurry from this place."

He longed to question her more, longed to solve the mystery that infolded the strange girl, but, well understanding the danger of discovery by the Moors, he permitted her to lead the way along the passage.

The stairs were reached, and Igela sprang up them as lightly as a fawn.

At the top of the stairs the heavy door was standing partly open. Beyond that door they might come face to face with Ben Ahmet and Ali Mustaf.

Frank was not armed. He would have given almost anything for a revolver at that moment. With such a weapon in his possession, he would have felt able to cope with half a dozen Moors.

The door was reached, and they passed beyond it, leaving the horrors of the underground dungeon behind.

Every nerve in Frank Merriwell's body was at a high tension, and he was ready for anything they might encounter.

They came into a long, low room, the walls of which were bare and white-washed. The room was unfurnished and gloomy, with no opening windows to admit light and air.

Igela led the way through this room and into a passage, where she paused to listen, her hand trembling on Frank's arm. He grasped her fingers, and gave them a reassuring pressure.

Then they stole along the passage, making as little noise as possible. Past a door that looked into an empty room they made their way, and, as they came to a strong door, Igela made him put out the light.

In the darkness his arm stole round her, and she let him hold her thus while she listened.

Being satisfied that all was well, she opened the door, and a rush of air smote Frank in the face, telling him that the door opened to the outside world.

How grateful that fresh air was to the boy who had been imprisoned in a place that was close and dank! He drew it into his lungs with a keen sense of delight, and he seemed to become himself once more—cool, nervy, self-reliant.

But they were not yet on the street, as he quickly discovered. They were in the court which he had once before crossed that night.

There was no moon, but the stars told that the night was well spent, and morning approaching. Igela seemed to read the stars, for she whispered:

"We must hasten. You must be far from here when day comes."

Across the court they hurried, passed through another door and another passage, and came at last to a door that let them out upon the street.

They had seen no one—not even a sleeping servant. Fortunate, indeed, had they been, and Frank felt that Providence had smiled on them.

"You are free," whispered Igela, with something like a sob. "Go! We shall never meet again. Leave Tangier without

delay. Ben Ahmet has the sultan's favor, and the sultan is all powerful here. Go, Frank! May Allah protect you! Farewell."

He did not release her.

"I will not go like this!" came swiftly from his lips. "I must know the truth—I must understand this mystery. Igela, lift that veil. The stars are bright, and my eyes have become accustomed to darkness. I must see your face. Lift your veil!"

She raised her hand to obey, and, at that moment, it seemed as if the very heavens came crashing and thundering upon Frank Merriwell's head. He fell prostrate upon the ground, where he lay like a creature death-stricken by a thunderbolt!

CHAPTER IX.

FRANK GROWS DESPERATE.

How long he lay insensible in the street Frank never knew. When his senses returned and he sat up, he saw an old water carrier staring wild-eyed at him.

Frank spoke to the man, but the water carrier seemed frightened, and hastened away, muttering prayers in the Berber tongue.

And now the terrible pain that had been in his throat was in his head. He put up his hand, and it was red with blood when he took it away.

"I was struck down," he muttered.

It was morning. In the east was a gray light that was spreading and growing rosy. It was the blush of the newly risen day.

In a short time the boy gathered his scattered wits. He remembered all that had happened—remembered that Igela had aided him to escape—remembered that the heavens had seemed to crash upon his head just as she was about to lift her veil.

And he had not seen her face! To him she remained a baffling mystery.

Who struck him down?

What had become of her?

Then came another question that puzzled him more than all.

Why had he not been slain?

He looked around. Near at hand was a small door set in the bare white wall. It was firmly closed.

"We came out of there," he told himself. "Some one must have been in that nook near by. We were seen, and I was knocked over. Then she was dragged back."

The thought made him feel desperate. He longed to arise and batter down the door, walk into the house, and save her from her persecutors.

"I am faint and weak and I can do nothing. I will mark this spot, so I may find my way back to it."

Then he arose and moved away with an uncertain step, having taken note of the appearance of the door, so he felt sure he would recognize it if he saw it again.

Tangier is not an easy city for a foreigner to find his way through, as Frank discovered. He moved slowly, noting every peculiarity of the narrow, crooked street.

Muffled figures passed him, gazing askant at him from beneath beetling brows. All seemed to wonder that a foreigner and a Christian should be astir, wandering through the streets at that hour in the morning.

That was what Frank fancied at first, but he finally lifted his hand to his throbbing head again, and he understood why they stared at him so strangely.

He was hatless, and the blood from his wound had dripped down the side of his face. He knew he must be an object to attract the curiosity of any beholder.

He found the square, and then it was not difficult to make his way to the hotel.

As Frank had expected, he found Professor Scotch and Ephraim nearly distracted with fear and suspense. When they saw him their joy was boundless.

It did not take the lad long to relate his adventures, having first bathed the wound on his head, and bound it up with a cloth.

"Well, for genuine downright foolhardiness you take the biscuit!" declared the professor, falling into the slang that he had sometimes heard from the lips of his youthful companions.

"But you should remember that I was in the company of Azza, your trusted servant," said Frank, smiling grimly.

"Hang that rascal! If I ever get hold of him—Well, he will wish I hadn't! He ought to be horsewhipped!"

"Gol dern him!" cried Ephraim. "He'd oughter be shot!"

"Well, I scarcely fancy we shall see him again while we remain in Tangier," said Frank, quietly. "That does not worry me nearly so much as the mystery that surrounds the Pearl of Tangier. If I do not find a way to solve that mystery I shall regret it all my life. She must be saved from those miserable old Moors."

"It is easy to say that, my boy; but how are we to save her?"

"You must lay the case before the United States Consul, professor."

"What good would that do? He would have no right to interfere between a girl and her uncle, who is her lawful guardian. It is not possible for us to help her now."

"That's pleasant! But you do not know, professor."

"I know that we are going to get out of this city as soon as possible. You will be killed if we remain here much longer."

"Professor, in the United States you are my guardian, but we are in a heathen country now, and I refuse to be dragged away till I am sure I have done everything in my power to aid that unfortunate girl."

"Are you in love with her?"

"No; but my manhood has been appealed to, and I feel that it is my duty to save her, if I can."

"Yeou may not be in love with her," drawled Ephraim; "but, by thutter! she's smashed on yeou."

"There is something remarkable about that," said Frank. "The girl seems to know me, and she speaks as if there had been something between us in the past. That seems impossible, for I have no recollection of her, and she appears to be a devout little Mohammedan. Is this not mystery enough to pique the curiosity of anybody?"

"Your curiosity may cost you your life."

"Oh, you are a croaker, professor. Besides my curiosity to know more about the girl, I want to get even with Ali Mustaf and Ben Ahmet, as I swore I would when I was a captive in that underground dungeon."

Professor Scotch made a gesture of despair.

"Wait till I get you back to the United

States!" he cried. "I'll throw up my job as your guardian quicker than a wink."

The professor found it useless to argue with the boy, and he gave it up.

Frank remembered what Igela had said about Bab-el-Maroc, and he sought to know what she meant. He found out that there was a gate of the city of Fez by that name, and also a castle so called.

The castle belonged to Ben Ahmet, and was situated outside of Fez.

Igela had spoken of Frank's escape from Bab-el-Maroc, but the boy had never been there, which made the mystery all the deeper.

Having eaten breakfast, and rested through much of the forenoon, Frank accompanied the professor on a visit to Mr. Adams, the United States Consul.

The houses occupied by the members of the foreign legations were situated near the square. They were all very modest little buildings, but they had the appearance of palaces in the midst of the paltry dwellings by which they were surrounded.

Mr. Adams received the professor pleasantly, and shook hands with Frank, saying:

"It really does one good to look into the face of a lively, wide-awake American youth."

Seated in the cozy little parlor, Frank related the story of his adventures since entering Tangier.

Mr. Adams listened with interest which grew to wonder and astonishment. By the time Frank had finished the man was breathless. "My boy, my boy!" he exclaimed, "you are indeed fortunate to be alive! Ben Ahmet is rich and powerful, and has the favor of the sultan. If he had murdered you, you never would have been heard of again, and all efforts to trace you would have been baffled. You are only a 'Christian dog,' and your life is of little consequence in this miserable land."

"But the girl," cried Frank, "can nothing be done to save her from old Ali Mustaf, whom she loathes?"

"I fear not. It is in the power of Ben Ahmet to make her marry whoever he may choose, and Ali Mustaf will get her, if Ben Ahmet wills it so."

Such a thing was terrible for the boy to contemplate, and it did not seem pos-

sible that there was no law to prevent it. It was almost impossible for Frank to realize that he was in a land where might ruled with a heavy, blood-stained hand, and where the innocent and helpless cried out in vain for mercy and justice.

"I do not propose to give up," declared Frank, resolutely. "Fortune has smiled on me many times, and it may smile again. It is not very far across the Straits to Spain. In Spain we could defy Ben Ahmet and Ali Mustaf to drag Igela back to Morocco."

"But what could you do with her if you succeeded in getting her out of the country? She is a Moorish maiden, and it is scarcely probable that you want to marry her."

"I would not permit it if he did!" roared Scotch.

"I am not contemplating matrimony just at present," smiled Frank. "But I am determined to solve this mystery, and I will succeed."

Mr. Adams shook his head gravely.

"You are rash and headstrong," he said. "Take my advice and let the Pearl of Tangier alone."

He refused to aid Frank in any way, but was courteous and polite. When Frank and the professor left the house and started to return to the hotel the boy's heart felt like lead in his bosom.

Shortly after the hotel was reached Ephraim Gallup came rushing into their room, caught hold of Frank excitedly, and spluttered:

"Gol derned ef yeou hain't lost her naow!"

"What do you mean?" demanded the other boy.

"She's gone."

"Who?"

"Igela."

"Gone where?"

"Flew the coop—left the city."

"Left Tangier?"

"Yep."

"When?"

"Jest naow."

"How do you know?"

"Saw um go."

"Saw them? Whom?"

"Igela, Ali Mustaf, Ben Ahmet, and a gang of black-skinned fellers, all armed

to the teeth. They rode away after a caravan. I was jest ramblin' araound, an' I got outside the city, so that's haow I happened to see um go."

"Are you sure it was Igela?"

"Yep. She saw me."

"She did?"

"Yep. Sodid Ben Ahmet. Bythutteration! it's a mighty good thing I've got long laigs. Ef I hedn't I wouldn't be here naow. Old Ben sot three uv them black fellers arter me, an' yeou'd oughter seen me tear up the dust an' git aout uv that. They chased me a piece, yellin' like thunder, but I got erway, an' here I be."

Frank took a quick turn up and down the room.

"So they have dragged Igela away!" he muttered. "Without doubt, they are bound for Fez and the castle of Bab-el-Maroc. I shall follow."

CHAPTER X.

A MAD VENTURE.

Frank was determined. Professor Scotch objected in vain. He appealed to Ephraim, and the Yankee lad said:

"I'll stick ter Frank. I don't keer a dern where he goes!"

Frank set about pleading the professor to succumb, and he was persuasive to a degree that astounded Ephraim. Indeed, it seemed that the boy almost hypnotized Scotch and led him to consent to follow the old Moors who were carrying Igela away.

The professor himself was amazed when he gave in, and he remained in a dazed condition while Frank called the proprietor of the hotel and bargained for three horses, which he instructed the professor to pay for.

The horses were quickly furnished, and Scotch paid for them, muttering a feeble remonstrance, but feeling unable to resist the power of the boy's steady eyes, which never left his face for an instant.

Frank had triumphed, but he showed no exultation. His face was grim and set, and it seemed that he had formed a resolution from which nothing could turn him.

In company with the professor and Ephraim, he went out to seek information. He learned that two caravans had

lately started for Fez, either of which might be overtaken by nightfall by hard riding.

That was what he wished to know.

Ali Mustaf and Ben Ahmet would travel with one of those caravans. Frank, Ephraim and the professor would travel with the other. Frank would bide his time, and he felt sure he would be able to meet Igela and speak with her.

It was a wild and desperate project at which a man would have hesitated; but Frank was a youth to whom nothing seemed impossible.

Back to the hotel they went. While they ate, the horses were ordered saddled and brought round. Frank had looked them over, and found them tough little Arab horses, looking as if they could travel and stand hardship. That satisfied him.

After eating, Frank went to his trunk, from which he took a brace of revolvers, having lost his others the night before. In his trunk he also carried a light, short-barreled Winchester repeater, and this he took out.

His eyes fell on the magician's cabinet, and a thought struck him. He hesitated, and then muttered:

"Who knows? These Moors are superstitious, and they might prove valuable. I will take such as I can carry."

From the cabinet he extracted numerous things which he concealed about his person. Among other things was a small electric battery.

Ephraim armed himself in a manner similar to Frank.

The professor had a strong aversion for firearms, and so he went about entirely unarmed.

Frank did not forget to take some strong field-glasses.

When everything was ready they descended and left the hotel.

Three black men were holding the horses at the door, and the proprietor of the hotel was there to see them off.

"How far are you going?" he asked, regarding them curiously.

"Not far," answered Frank. "It is probable you will see us back to-morrow."

The proprietor shook his head gravely.

"I fear for that," he said. "You had better keep within a few miles of the

city, for the plains at a distance are infested with robber bands, any of which would not hesitate to do murder. I do not understand why you are going outside the city, anyway, for there is nothing to be seen."

Frank was not inclined to satisfy his curiosity, and they rode away, waving him a farewell, which he returned.

Not till they were beyond the city's limits did the professor think that he had not told his friend, the United States Consul, of this foolhardy expedition. He would have turned back at once, but Frank said:

"Very well, professor, you may go; but we shall not wait for you, as we have no time to lose, if we hope to overtake one of those caravans before nightfall."

The professor had turned his horse about. A groan left his lips, and it changed to a cry of horror as he lifted his eyes to the high posts which stood on either side of the gate in the white wall of the city.

"Look!" he gasped. "It is horrible!"

The boys looked, and on each of those posts they saw a human head that had been severed from the body. These heads had been suspended by the hair to some curved points which projected from the posts, and they hung there in all their ghastly horror, dripping blood and gazing with sightless eyes toward the desert for which the boys and the professor were bound.

"Wal, I be gol derved!" gurgled Ephraim, his voice sounding husky and catching in his throat. "Them's purty things to look at!"

"They are the heads of criminals," explained Frank. "I have read that it is the custom of this country to suspend the heads of criminals at the gates of the cities in this manner. They are placed there as a warning to others."

"A warning to us," said the professor, his voice shaking. "It tells us we had better get out of this wretched country without delay. It is a warning to be heeded."

"Nonsense! Come on, professor; we are losing time."

"Go on! I am going back."

"Good-by, professor."

At a signal from Frank the two lads rode onward.

The professor watched them a few moments, and then rode after them, calling: "Hold on; I will go."

Of this Frank had felt confident all the time.

Away to the south they rode, having been told to bear a little to the east. Frank had a compass, and he did not believe they would get lost in the desert so they could not find their way out.

Long, level plains lay before them. Here and there they could see small huts made of sun-baked clay.

Occasionally they passed by fields where some crude efforts at tilling the soil had been made, but the greater part of the country was bleak and bare.

The sun beat down mercilessly on the bare plain. The grass was withered and brown, and patches of sandy soil reflected the heat.

There were no roads, but for some time after leaving Tangier they could follow in the track made by many caravans that had passed that way. Gradually this track became fainter and fainter, till at last it was lost entirely.

The solitude of the plains was depressing, the silence was awesome.

Frank began to realize the magnitude of his undertaking, and, for the first time, he doubted the wisdom of the attempt; but he said nothing, riding onward in silence, his face firm and resolute.

Professor Scotch was silent and gloomy, while Ephraim's jests seemed to fall flat and be lost on the others.

The sun swung lower and lower, but its rays seemed to lose none of their scorching heat.

"What ef we should not find one of them air carryvans ter-night, Frank?" asked Ephraim, rather anxiously.

"We will find it in the morning," was the calm reply.

Scotch groaned.

"And have to stay all alone on the desert to-night!" he exclaimed. "We should be devoured a hundred times by wild beasts."

"It's not wild beasts we have to fear so much as wild men," said Frank. "We must keep our eyes about us."

"What'd we eat for supper?" asked the

boy from Vermont, who possessed a very healthy appetite. "That's what I'd like to know."

"We would not eat till we found the caravan in the morning."

"If we did not find the caravan," put in the professor, "we might starve. There is a fine chance to starve out here."

"I scarcely think we will starve. I have provided for that."

"You have? Why you have brought no provisions."

"No; but I have brought something that will keep us from starving."

"What is it?"

"Some nuts."

"What kind of nuts?"

"Koola nuts, which I found in Bakalaland, far to the south. The natives down there eat this nut when they cannot obtain food, and it keeps up their strength and preserves them from hunger for many days. It is a wonderful little nut, but it is dangerous."

"Haow's that?" asked Ephraim.

"It is a very easy thing to fall into the habit of eating it to obtain relief from over-exertion, and this habit fastens itself on a person like drinking or smoking. It shows no ill result at first, but it is ruinous to one who persists in its use. It will make such a person a tottering wreck, like a victim of the morphine habit. Like all good things, the koola nut may be used to excess. In the United States several concerns advertise decoctions made from the koola nut, recommending them to athletes, bicyclists and all who exert themselves in sports and pastimes. College lads are taking to its use, in case they play football, baseball, or anything of the sort. Some of them will become addicted to the habit, and it may ruin them. Bicyclists have found it refreshing and invigorating after a long run, and they are becoming victims of the habit. Hundreds, yes thousands will be weakened and broken down by it. It is——"

"Hold on, Frank," cried Ephraim. "Jest let the kooly nut rest a while, an' see what you make uv this."

He pointed across the plain to where a tiny cloud of dust could be seen. In the midst of the dust was a moving mass that became more and more distinct with each passing moment.

"Horsemen," said Frank Merriwell, grimly. "Look to your weapons, Ephraim. We may have trouble."

CHAPTER XI.

AMATEUR MAGIC.

Professor Scotch's teeth chattered.

"We are all done for!" he groaned.

"This is the end of this foolish expedition. I knew how it would come."

"Wal, we'll raise a little rumpus before they chaw us up," said Ephraim, in his quaint way. "I'd feel a little safer ef I was to hum on the farm, but ef I've gotter fight I'll fight fer all I am worth, yeou bet!"

Frank was examining his rifle, making sure it was in perfect working order.

The body of horsemen approached with great swiftness, so that in a short time they could be seen quite distinctly. Frank surveyed them through his field-glasses.

They numbered more than half a hundred, and were dressed in long, flowing robes of many colors. About their heads they wore turbans. They were armed with muskets.

Beyond the horsemen Frank saw a caravan of camels that was approaching, and he immediately decided that the people of the caravan had seen himself and his companions and had sent out the band of horsemen to intercept them.

"Ten to one they are Ben Ahmet's vassals," was his thought. "It is possible he has received word from Tangier that we are on the desert, and he has sent his slaves to murder us. Well, we will die hard."

As they approached, the horsemen began shouting and waving their long-barreled rifles over their heads. They rode recklessly, madly, and the sound of the horses' hoofs was like sullen thunder.

The leader was an old man with a long white beard, wearing about his head a bright-colored turban. He rode his coal-black horse like a youth of twenty years.

"Jingoes! they can ride!!" muttered Frank, admiringly. "They remind me of American cowboys."

"They kinder make me think it's golder unhealthy araound here," gurgled Ephraim. "I'm beginnin' to wish I hedn't come."

"Brace up," came sharply from Frank. "Everything depends on our nerve now. If we show signs of weakness, there is not one chance in a hundred for us. Keep a stiff backbone, Ephraim."

"It's a fine thing to say 'brace up,'" fluttered the agitated professor, "but what show have we got against that gang of cut-throats!"

"We are not going to lie down and die, professor."

Of a sudden, with a wild yell, the horsemen divided and swept round the party in opposite directions, passed and swept round again.

"Like Indians in the Western States," breathed Frank, seeing them string out till there were two parties of horsemen riding in opposite directions, and both surrounding the professor and the two boys.

These evolutions were continued for some time, with the caravan of camels steadily approaching while it was going on. When the Arabs had shown their skill as riders, the old leader, or sheik, gave a signal that caused them to wheel into one compact mass. Then the chief rode boldly toward the professor and the boys.

"I sp'ose he thinks aour hair is stand-in' by this time," drawled Ephraim.

"Be cool," directed Frank. "I will meet him."

The boy dismounted and calmly advanced to meet the old Arab, having given his rifle to Ephraim.

"What do you desire of us, sir?" asked Frank, as they came near together.

The old man glowered at the boy, and then asked, in rather poor English:

"Is there no man with you? Ain-el-Khair has no time to waste with boys."

Frank flushed a bit, drawing himself up proudly, as he returned:

"Though I am a boy, I am the leader of this party. If you have any business with us, you will do it with me."

"By the beard of the Prophet, you speak boldly for a youth! But you do not know me, else you would grovel in the dust at my feet."

"I am not in the habit of groveling in the dust for any one," said the boy, proudly. "I scarcely think I would begin with you."

The scowl on Ain-el-Khair's face deepened.

"I say you do not know me," he repeated.

"Ah, but I know you well," declared Frank. "You are a robber and a great rascal. You hate your enemies, and you slay them with delight. Your hands are stained with blood, but your conscience does not trouble you."

"Dog of a Christian!" roared the old sheik, quivering with passion. "Do you dare speak thus to me?"

"Why should I fear? You cannot harm me."

This statement was sufficient to cause Ain-el-Khair's face to change from an expression of fury to one of derision and amusement.

"Fool!" he sneered. "It must be that you have lost your senses. I have more than half a hundred men behind me, and they would wipe three Christians off the face of the earth in a moment."

"If you had a thousand men, you could not harm me. I am protected by a power you know nothing of."

The old sheik knew not what to make of the boy, and so he said:

"I will not pass words with you. My followers have arrived, and we must move on. When you have paid tribute we will leave you."

"We shall not pay tribute to you."

"What? Knave, do you dare refuse? Then I will slay you with my own hand!"

Ain-el-Khair drew a long-barreled pistol, which he pointed at the boy; but Frank did not seem at all frightened.

The caravan of camels had halted, and the Arabs were gathered in a group at a little distance, watching what was passing between the old sheik and the boy. Much nearer were the professor and Ephraim, who had also dismounted, their horses standing close at hand.

"I tell you it is not possible for you to harm me, Ain-el-Khair," Frank again declared. "If you think you can, take aim and shoot. I dare you to do so."

The old robber was not one to be dared in such a manner. He lifted the long-barreled pistol, and, without hesitation, fired at the boy.

When the pistol spoke Frank pretended to take the bullet from his teeth. He stood

erect and unharmed, holding a round ball of lead between his thumb and finger, smiling at the astounded Arab.

Ain-el-Khair staggered, his eyes bulging from his head.

"Allah save me!" he gasped. "He is not harmed!"

"Not in the least," said the lad, easily. "You might fire a hundred bullets at me, and not one of them would do any harm."

"You must be a sorcerer."

"I am the greatest sorcerer alive. I cannot be slain, but I have power to slay by my touch."

That was too much for the sheik to believe, and he plainly expressed his unbelief.

Immediately Frank stepped forward and grasped both of Ain-el-Khair's hands. A yell of fear and pain came from the lips of the old Arab, who began to squirm and dance in a most amazing manner, trying to tear his hands away. After a moment of this, Frank released him, stepping back.

The robber chief stared at the boy, with fear showing plainly in his bulging eyes. This Christian was truly a great sorcerer.

"Are you satisfied?" demanded Frank; "or would you see more?"

Ain-el-Khair did not speak.

"Look!" cried the boy. "Behold my protectors. Had I willed it thus a hundred of them would have planted their poison fangs in your flesh when I touched your hands."

Out of the boy's sleeves, his pockets, and various parts of his clothing, squirming, hissing serpents writhed and twisted. They twined along his arms, twisted about his legs and his neck, popped into view, and vanished. All the while he was moving his hands up and down and around, seeming to pick them off his body and cast them into the air, where they instantly vanished. Of a sudden he slapped his hands, and every serpent disappeared.

"Are you satisfied?" Frank again demanded.

"I am satisfied," confessed the sheik. "You are a great sorcerer. What wouldst thou have me do?"

A sudden thought flashed through the boy's brain.

"Take me to Ben Ahmet," he answered. "It is he whom I seek."

"Ben Ahmet!" cried Ain-el-Khair. "A thousand curses on him! He has led the sultan to place a price on my head. I have heard that he is in Tangier, and that is why I am here. I hope to meet him face to face when he attempts to return to Fez."

"He is already on his way. He left Tangier this morning, and, with his fighting men, he is somewhere on the desert. We have followed to overtake him. We have little money with us, but, if you can aid us against Ben Ahmet, I will promise you a goodly sum. What is your answer?"

"We will sit down together and talk it over. Perhaps it can be done."

So they sat upon the ground, Ain-el-Khair taking care to keep at a distance from the boy whom he now feared and respected.

CHAPTER XII.

A COMPACT WITH ROBBERS.

Frank Merriwell had played a desperate game, and it looked as if he had won. If Ain el-Khair had fired at the boy's head the game would have ended suddenly in a tragedy; but the old sheik discharged the pistol at Frank's breast, and, although the bullet pierced the outer clothing, no harm was done.

From the traveling magician of whom he had purchased the cabinet the boy had obtained a bullet-proof shirt. This he had donned before accompanying Azza in response to the appeal supposed to come from Igela, which may account, in a measure, for his unusual recklessness.

The small electric battery which came with the magician's cabinet was very powerful, and was supplied with some fine wires that ran down Frank's sleeves to his hands. Before going out to meet the robber sheik Frank had taken care to see that the battery was in working order, and he had given the old rascal a severe shock when he grasped his hand.

The serpent trick was one of the illusions he had learned from the magician, and it had proved very valuable in working on the superstitious fears of Ain-el-Khair. Even after they had seated them-

selves face to face upon the ground, the sheik was constantly watching for the swaying head of a snake to appear somewhere about the boy's person. The old robber was sure a hundred serpents must be concealed in Frank's clothes.

The astonishment of Professor Scotch can be much better imagined than described. To him it had seemed that Frank was crazy when he advanced to meet the old chief, and what followed that meeting filled him with unspeakable amazement. He could not understand why Frank did not fall when the sheik fired point-blank at him, nor could he imagine why Ain-el-Khair danced and yelled when Frank grasped his hands.

By the time the serpents began to appear and disappear about the boy's person the professor realized that Frank was attempting to overawe the Arab by a display of legerdemain.

"It is folly," muttered the professor. "We shall be murdered just the same."

"Wal, Idunno abaout that," drawled Ephraim Gallup. "By gum! I kainder cal'late Frank knows what he's doin' of."

The boy from Vermont was beginning to believe Frank could accomplish almost anything he undertook, no matter how difficult it might be.

For nearly half an hour the boy and the old sheik sat face to face on the ground, talking earnestly. The robber chief was seen to make excited gestures, as if much aroused by something Frank had told him.

The sheik's followers witnessed this interview with unbounded astonishment. They could not understand what it meant.

Finally the old sheik and the boy arose, and Ain-el-Khair made a gesture that caused his fighting men to leap upon their horses and come tearing down at the two about whom they gathered, paying not the slightest attention to the professor and Ephraim.

The chief made a brief speech in Arabic, and his words were greeted with loud yells from his followers.

Then the band parted, and Frank walked back to his anxious friends.

"For Heaven's sake! what does all this mean?" fluttered the agitated professor. "Explain it at once."

"It means that I have made a compact with Ain-el-Khair," declared Frank, smiling triumphantly. "He hates Ben Ahmet and Ali Mustaf most heartily, and he is looking for them now."

"What kind of a compact have you made?"

"I have agreed to give him a garment that will make him bullet-proof if he will aid us in rescuing Igela from Ben Ahmet. He says he will do so, and will guard us to within a short distance of the wall of Tangier."

"But how can you give him a garment that will make him bullet-proof?"

"By giving him the shirt I have on. You must stand between me and the Arabs while I remove it. Bring two of the horses on the same side."

This was done, and Frank hastily and deftly removed the shirt, while Ain-el-Khair supposed the young sorcerer was manufacturing the garment by some mysterious process.

"I hope he will be able to get it on," said the boy, anxiously.

A great shout went up from the Arabs as Frank advanced toward them, with the garment in his hand. The sheik met the boy and received the shirt, examining it curiously. He asked many questions about it, and Frank assured him that no bullet could pierce it.

Then Ain-el-Khair made one of his followers don the shirt, after which the fellow was forced to stand up while the old sheik fired a shot at him at a distance of not more than ten feet.

The wearer of the shirt staggered a bit, but remained unharmed by the bullet.

When Ain-el-Khair saw this he turned to Frank and made a most profound salaam, saying:

"You have kept your word, Christian sorcerer, and now you shall see that Ain-el-Khair can keep his."

Then he lost no time in donning the shirt, which, fortunately, was large enough, although it was a "tight fit."

The caravan of camels had been captured by the sheik, and he was holding them for tribute; but he quickly decided not to bother with them longer, but to ride at once with horses in search of Ben Ahmet.

In a short time the desert robbers were on the move, and Frank rode at the side of Ain-el-Khair, with Ephraim and the professor close behind.

It was a queer adventure, and Frank was inclined to wonder if he would not awaken and discover that it was a dream.

Night came on the desert, and the caravan had not been sighted. Still Ain-el-Khair pressed on, and he was finally rewarded by seeing the gleam of a camp fire.

Toward the light they rode. When they had come near enough for him to tell, the old sheik declared a caravan had halted there for the night.

"We will attack it," he said; "and I pray Allah we may find my enemy there."

Straight toward the caravan they rode, and like a whirlwind the desert robbers dashed down upon it. The fighting men of the caravan fired a few shots, but, discovering they were greatly outnumbered, quickly ceased, throwing down their muskets and crying to be spared.

Ain-el-Khair looked for Ben Ahmet—and found him! The old sheik had joined that caravan, and Ali Mustaf was at his side. They stood before one of the small tents.

"Praise Allah," cried the robber sheik, exultantly, speaking in Arabic. "I have found you, Ben Ahmet! You are the one who caused the sultan to put a price on my head, but you shall not live to see me destroyed. I have come to kill you."

"But I will kill you first!" shouted the sheik, as he lifted a pistol and fired straight at the breast of the robber chief.

Ain-el-Khair felt the bullet strike against his wonderful shirt, but he was not harmed by it, and, a moment later, he shot Ben Ahmet through the head.

Seeing this Ali Mustaf uttered a yell of terror and fled into the darkness.

In a moment Frank Merriwell leaped from his horse and tore open the front of the tent.

"Igela!" he called; "are you here?"

With a cry of joy she sprang into his arms!

CHAPTER XIII.

CONCLUSION.

It was morning when four exhausted, dust-covered persons rode into Tangier and hastened to the house of the United States Consul. They were professor Scotch, Ephraim Gallup, Frank Merriwell and Igela.

Ain-el-Khair had kept his word in every particular. He had escorted them almost to the very gate of the city.

"We must get out of Morocco before the truth is known concerning the attack on that caravan," said Frank. "We shall be branded as robbers, and a price will be placed on our head."

"Which is a very pleasant thing to contemplate!" said the professor.

At the house of the United States Consul a surprise awaited them. Mr. Adams listened to their story and then said:

"There seems to be a case of mistaken identity mixed up in this affair. Last night a young man who has just crossed the desert from Fez, after escaping from the castle of Bab-el-Maroc, came to me for protection and aid. He has told me his story, which, together with what I have heard from Mr. Merriwell, has thrown some light on a very singular matter."

He opened a door and called to a person in an adjoining room. A moment later a rather thin and pale youth entered the parlor.

"Permit me to introduce you to Mr. Frank Parker, gentlemen," said the consul. "Mr. Parker is from London. Mr. Parker—Mr. Merriwell, Professor Scotch, Mr. Gallup, all from the United States. And this is——"

He was interrupted by a cry from Igela, who had been standing and staring at Frank Parker as if turned to stone. Her eyes passed from Parker's face to that of Frank Merriwell; from one to the other she looked a score of times, and then she ran into Parker's arms.

"Remarkable!" exclaimed Scotch—"very remarkable! Why, Frank, this Parker looks enough like you to be your brother—your twin brother. It is an astonishing resemblance."

"That is true," smiled Frank; "and I fancy I have been taken for Mr. Parker by more than one person. Igela, Ben

Ahmet and Ali Mustaf all believed that I was Parker. Ben Ahmet believed it, even though he had left Parker confined in the castle of Bab-el-Maroc, hundreds of miles away. Igela believed I had escaped from that castle and come here to Tangier, which explains some things she said to me. The whole matter is clearing up."

It was clearing up, but, somehow, Frank felt as if he had lost something of wonderful value. He saw Igela in the arms of his counterpart and then he turned away.

Mr. Adams hastily and briefly explained how Igela's father, having lost the wife he loved, and being very fond of his daughter, whom he regarded as a mere child, had carried her with him on one of his business expeditions to London. There she had met Frank Parker and had fallen in love with him. From that moment it was the girl's aim and ambition to perfect herself in the English language, which she studied persistently, speaking it with her black servant, who had once been in England, and knew the language. This explained how it came about that the Pearl of Tangier could speak such perfect English.

Igela returned to Morocco with her father, but she did not forget Frank Parker, who had promised to come for her some day and take her away with him. Her father died, and she fell into the hands of her uncle. Then she wrote an appeal to Parker, telling him he must come soon, or she would be forced to marry.

Parker had traveled in France and Spain by himself; but he dared not tell his folks that he was going to Morocco and why he was going. He obtained consent to visit Paris, and, without delay, he hastened to Morocco, crossed the desert to Fez, saw Igela, tried to carry her off, was captured and confined in a dungeon, from which he was never to be released.

For an English youth he was a wonder. He found an opportunity to attack and slay the keeper who brought him food, and he escaped in the man's clothes. By rare fortune he had been able to get across the desert to Tangier.

When they had heard this story from the lips of Mr. Adams, Frank told how

Igela had been rescued, and that it was likely the entire party would be branded as robbers with very little delay.

"You must all get out of the country immediately," said Mr. Adams. "I know a very wealthy gentleman who is laying off Tangier in his steam yacht, in which he contemplates a cruise up the Mediterranean. You must get aboard that yacht without delay, and he must take you all away. If the girl goes she must be taken through Tangier as a boy—she must be disguised."

Arrangements for the attempt were quickly made.

* * * * *

The party succeeded in getting on board the yacht, which carried them from Tangier to Marseilles, in France.

By that time Frank Parker had related his story in detail a score of times, and all confessed it a most wonderful and remarkable adventure.

Igela had discarded her vail in the house of the United States Consul, and she declared she would never wear it again. She was very pretty.

"I am going to London to become a Christian," she said, laughing.

"You are going to London to become——"

Parker whispered the final words in her ear, and she laughed again, her dark eyes glowing, her cheeks warm with color.

In Paris the party separated, for Parker and the girl hastened onward toward London.

In parting from Frank, the girl suddenly held her face up to him, saying:

"My Frank will not be angry, and you are so brave and noble! Kiss me!"

Frank felt the blood leap into his face, but he stooped and touched his lips to hers.

The memory of that kiss remained with him always.

(THE END.)

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